Where Creativity and Innovation go to School: A case study of the KaosPilot School of Leadership and Social Entrepreneurship

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Abstract

Increasingly dynamic business environments and calls for responsible ways of doing business, demand new approaches to leadership. This implies a need to rethink management education and to generate knowledge on how to support the development of the leadership competencies and attitudes necessary to navigate in these new business contexts. This paper is based on a study of the Scandinavian based 3-year educational program The KaosPilot School of Leadership and Social Entrepreneurship. The school presents an exciting case by employing action- and design based approached to learning, by integrating sustainability, social innovation and cultural diversity as cornerstones of the curriculum and through supporting a strong and appreciative feedback culture. This paper aims to contribute to an understanding of how action learning and a design approach to learning, combined with an appreciative attitude and feedback culture, can create a generative learning space for leaders supporting the development of competencies and attitudes enabling them to become social entrepreneurs and to lead businesses which seize the opportunity to become corporate citizens.

Key Words
Responsible management education, action learning, appreciative inquiry, managing as designing

Introduction

The question that lies at the core of this study is the question of how we can imagine and design management education so as to support the development of leadership competencies and attitudes able to meet the business challenges of the 21st century. These questions are pursued through the study of the innovative approach to designing and facilitating leadership education, represented by the privately run Scandinavian based educational program, the KaosPilot School of Leadership and Social Entrepreneurship1. The study rests on a belief that it is time for radical shift in how we imagine and

1 http://www.KaosPilot.dk
design management education, and this paper reflects a wish to engage in dialogue on how such a shift will be made possible.

Increasingly dynamic business environments, due to economic, environmental, social and cultural interrelations and imbalances, and calls for inclusive and responsible ways of doing business, demand new approaches to leadership, e.g. (Kanungo and Conger, 1990, Cummings, 1990, Cooperrider and Bilimoria, 1993, Cooperrider and Srivastva, 1998). Moreover, the increasing rate of change in society and in organizations, and the resulting focus on the ability of organizations and employees to be flexible, creative and innovative, has lead to a focus on new competencies development in the workplace and in business schools. This implies a need to rethink management education and to generate knowledge on how to support the development of leadership attitudes and competencies necessary to navigate in these new business contexts. This call is expressed in the Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME), introduced by UN, AACSB, EFMD, Net Impact, Aspen Institute, EABIS, GRLI and others in 2006, and it was indeed expressed in the call for the Global Forum 2009. Both calls emphasize the need to charter a new course for leadership education on a global scale. However, much still has to be done to generate knowledge and create concrete examples on how the principles and the vision of responsible and creative leadership can be integrated into the fabric of management education, globally.

Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to contribute to an understanding of new ways of designing management education, based on an in depth study of the Scandinavian based school the KaosPilot School of Leadership and Social Entrepreneurship. Through this the study seeks to contribute to an understanding of how we can create a generative learning space for leaders, which supports the development of competencies and attitudes enabling them to be leaders of tomorrow's businesses - businesses that assume the responsibility and seize the opportunity of acting as agents of world benefit.

Particularly this paper aims to contribute to an understanding of how we can create a learning space for responsible and creative leadership to flourish, by exploring how leadership attitudes and competencies can be nurtured through engaging in action learning, through encouraging an appreciative attitude and feedback culture, and through incorporating design approaches, such as prototyping and ideation, into the learning process. Through interviews with 35 students, alumni and members of staff, and through the analysis of the KaosPilot curriculum, this study looks into, how the learning approach, and the vision and aims expressed in the curriculum, are reflected in the leadership attitudes and competencies of current KaosPilot students. Additionally, the study looks into how the attitudes and the competencies nurtured at the school, are reflected in leadership attitudes of KaosPilot graduates, and in the businesses of the KaosPilot graduates, who have chosen to become entrepreneurs.

The study is framed as a single case study of the KaosPilot School of Leadership and Social Entrepreneurship. The study is mainly descriptive, providing an elaborate example of an alternative
way of designing and facilitating management education. However, the study includes reflections on the interrelationship between the learning processes and the learning outcomes, drawing on the descriptive part of the research and the theoretical framework employed. Moreover, the study inquires into, how the attitudes and competencies developed at the school are reflected in the leadership attitudes and in the businesses of KaosPilot graduates. The guiding questions for the study are: What is the potential of inviting leadership students to engage in real life challenges as an integral part of their education? What is the role of appreciation and feedback in supporting the professional and personal development of the students? How can we begin to understand and articulate the leadership competencies and attitudes needed to meet the needs and opportunities of our time?

The primary data is qualitative data generated through 30 interviews with KaosPilot staff, students and alumni during 2009. Moreover, data consists of written materials i.e. the curriculum 2004 and 2009, publications, internal documents, newsletters and the KaosPilot website. The interviews are conducted so as to get multiple perspectives on the case.

Ten interviews are with present and former KaosPilot team leaders, who offer their experiences on designing and facilitating the learning processes at the school, and their reflections on the competencies and attitudes supported through these processes. The team leaders offer their view on leadership, and the future of management education. Moreover, ten interviews are conducted with students, who are completing their final year of the KaosPilot programme. They share their personal experiences on being students at the school and of engaging in the action oriented and intense 3-year learning process. The students offer their insight on learning through an appreciative feedback culture and approach to learning, and on the role of the team and the team leader in their learning process. The students offer reflections on the competencies and attitudes nurtured at the school, and their experiences with incorporating social innovation, sustainability and cultural diversity into the learning process. Lastly, ten interviews are conducted with KaosPilot alumni, who are now employed or running their own business. These interviews provide insight into the competencies and attitudes supported at the school and how this reflected in the current leadership practices of KaosPilot alumni and the design of their businesses.

The interviews are conducted as semi-structured qualitative interviews, using interview guides focused on the same themes, but tailored to fit the situation of the three groups of informants. The interviews are based mainly on open questions including both linear and circular-reflective questions. Analysis of the data is done through open coding of the transcribed interviews and the documents included in the analysis.

The paper is structured in three main parts. Part I offers a rich description and discussion of the case, based on the curriculum and interviews with KaosPilot students and team leaders. Part I takes a close look at the curriculum, with a particular emphasis on the leadership competency model, the three main disciplines, the focus areas and the vision and core aims of the school. This part provides insights into the competencies and leadership attitudes nurtured at the school. Part II looks
into the interrelationship between the competencies and attitudes nurtured at the school and the learning approach employed at the school. Part III is focused on the experiences and reflections of KaosPilot alumni, providing insights into the competencies and attitudes they bring from their time at the school and how these later serve as a base for responsible leadership of businesses, which incorporate social responsibility, cultural diversity and sustainability into the business model. The paper concludes with discussing the primary findings, and by indicating the strengths of the approach to management education and leadership development presented through the case, while also pointing to the challenges associated with this approach. Finally, we discuss the limitations of the study and indicate opportunities for future research within the field.

Part I: The KaosPilot – An image of management education for the future

Since 1991 the KaosPilot School of Leadership and Social Entrepreneurship has offered a 3-year full time program in creative project-, process- and new business design. The school presents an exciting case for understanding an alternative approach to management education, by placing an explicit focus on sustainability, social innovation and cultural diversity as cornerstones of the curriculum, encouraging students to take an active stand and part on the world agenda. The School is also an interesting case, by having the aim of educating leaders, who, besides academic qualifications, develop competencies such as the ability to respond to and facilitate change, the ability to collaborate in teams and to take into account the larger social, cultural, economical and ecological contexts wherein the project or business is embedded, the ability to hold a personal vision, to act from personal values and gain insight into how values and beliefs influence action, and the ability to see and seize opportunities and bring these to manifest as value creation. These competencies are nurtured through working on an international team of students who engage in real-life action learning opportunities from the first day of the education, and who spend half their graduate time on world internships and outposts, collaborating with local as well as international clients from business, the public sector and non-profits. Moreover, use of design tools, such as ideation, prototyping, graphic recording, and scenario work, is an integral part of the learning processes, while these are also being part of the ‘toolbox’ the students get acquainted with during their study time. Lastly, learning is supported through continuous reflection as well as facilitated and informal feedback on the team, aiming at integrating the professional and personal development of the students.

The KaosPilot School of Leadership and Social Entrepreneurship is located in Aarhus, the second largest city in Denmark. The school is located in an old building in a vibrant part of the city centre, surrounded by a host of micro companies, open office spaces, and cultural venues.

As an educational program, the KaosPilot School of Leadership and Social Entrepreneurship, endeavors to be a positive answer to the fascinating challenges presently facing our part of the world.

2 KaosPilot curriculum, 2004
as part of globalization\textsuperscript{3}. At the heart of the KaosPilot program lies an idea about what motivates people to learn and to create, an idea brought into life in the shape of an educational program with the purpose of creating positive social change through the development of human potential. \textsuperscript{4} As such, the School aims to be a locally rooted, but internationally oriented, school for young leaders from the age of 21 onwards, who are encouraged to realize their dreams, discover their values and to create and realize new projects, processes and businesses in a frame of understanding the social, cultural, economical and environmental impact of the initiatives they bring forward.

\textbf{A brief history of the school}

The first team of KaosPilot students was enrolled in the summer of 1991, but the origins of the school go back to 1982, when the first Principal and founder of the KaosPilots, Uffe Elbaek, was a social worker in the City of Aarhus. His job was to keep unemployed youth off the streets, and he managed to create a spirited atmosphere leading to a group of young people committing to organize a street festival. By the late 1980s, a series of small-scale social and cultural projects arose out of this youth scene that was generated through this initiative. A local cultural magazine appeared, as well as a dance club, a theatre, a bicycle-courier service, multimedia companies, and more festivals. In the course of realizing their projects, the young people involved learned about financial management, communications, team building and how to promote their ideas in both political circles and the media.

Few of these youth had pursued higher education, and most were skeptical that college would teach them things that would help them in the challenges they were facing on a daily basis. This encouraged Elbæk to set up a college himself, which is what evolved into the KaosPilots School in 1991, based on the ambition to be a new education for young creative outsiders, who were attracted to the idea that the future is not something you can adapt to, but something you have to create yourself!

In the time since 1991 many private, public and non-government organizations see that the world is moving toward a new era - more global, more focused on making a social contribution, more open to democratic decision-making involving citizens and employees. However, many, if not most, educational institutions, including management education, have stayed stuck in traditional, and even outdated, ways of thinking. The KaosPilot School aims to explore and charter a new course for management education, by employing a radically different approach to learning, and by taking a different look at leadership and the competencies supported through the program.

Today the school has 487 graduates, and 111 students are currently enrolled at the school. The school offers a 3-year program, designed to meet the standards of the requirements for a bachelor degree as defined by the Danish Ministry of Education by 2002. The school is privately run and receives the primary funding through student tuition fees, but receives additional financing from the Danish government and support from private funds. Many KaosPilot students have already studied

\textsuperscript{3} www.KaosPilot.dk  
\textsuperscript{4} www.KaosPilot.dk
elsewhere, but transferred to the KaosPilots seeking an alternative educational environment to more traditional programs in business studies, the humanities, the social sciences, the arts and programs on architecture and design. Interestingly, interviews reveal that only few students have a clear picture of what the school is about when applying, describing instead that they were attracted to the “enthusiastic, and sometimes rebellious, spirit of the school”, was motivated by “the chance to do real projects” and to be part of “a place where you can learn how to, and be with other students who wish to, make a positive difference in the world”.

A school for social entrepreneurs and change agents
The KaosPilot curriculum emphasize that “a KaosPilot is an agent of change who takes the initiative to start up new activities, projects and businesses. A KaosPilot acts dynamically and with an eye for alternatives within social systems, organizations and networks in order to solve defined assignments and create new opportunities” (Curriculum, 2004). Moreover, a KaosPilot is “a generalist who operates across fields, who combines widely varying knowledge and competencies, and therefore has the potential to be a creative and motivating coordinator across different specializations. A bold proposition in the curriculum is that a KaosPilot is “dynamic, entrepreneurial, responsible, social, brave, persevering, creative and curious” (Curriculum, 2004).

As such, the KaosPilots’ point of departure is the aim of developing dynamic agents and leaders who can work in holistic ways that focus on new ways of thinking that are financially, environmentally and socially sustainable. Moreover, the learning approach at the education, indicate that the students develop the competencies and motivation for starting up new companies. A survey from 2003, as a part of an extensive evaluation report for the Danish Ministry of Education, showed in 2002 that 23% of all KaosPilot alumni were entrepreneurs and running a business, not with taking the intrapreneurs initiating new business spinoffs within the context of established organizations. 38% of the graduates had a job in the private sector, 17% in humanitarian organizations, 8% in the public sector and 8% in other countries than Denmark. As the numbers show, a larger number of graduates have an entrepreneurial profile, which is also captured by the words of the former Principal: “KaosPilots are people who don’t look for work, but make their own.”

Vision of being the best school for the world
The vision of the KaosPilot School is to contribute to a new agenda for and approach to education, by redesigning management education, and by attracting young, creative and socially responsible entrepreneurs and change agents who reach out for the opportunity to make a difference in the world and shape the society of tomorrow (Curriculum, 2004). As these statements convey, the ambition of the school is to be co-creators of a global agenda, encompassing social innovation, sustainability, and cultural diversity for next generation businesses, by creating, testing and displaying great ideas for
new products, processes and services, and by unfolding new images of and approaches to leadership and learning. The emphasis on being, not the best school in the world, but the best school for the world, may be a subtle play on words. However, it can also play an essential part in conveying that the KaosPilot program is about responsible leadership and wish to nurture the leadership required to contribute to a thriving and sustainable global economy and community.

The KaosPilot Curriculum and core disciplines
The KaosPilot educational curriculum is based on the criteria for a professional bachelor degree, as outlined by the Ministry of Education on April 18th, 2002. The backbone of the curriculum is the three disciplines of creative project-process and business design, the three core aims sustainability, social innovation and cultural diversity as well as the KaosPilot competency model and approach to learning. In the following we will present central concepts and points in the curriculum, which, will later be discussed in relation to the findings of the rich materials provided by the interviews with team leaders, students and alumni.

Creative Project Design
The three disciplines creative project-, process- and business design are ingrained in the learning processes throughout the 3 years, however with primary emphasis on project design at the first year, process design at the second year and business design at the final year of the education.

During the first year at the KaosPilots, the students are introduced to project leadership, with an emphasis on leadership. Creative project design is defined as the development, planning and coordination of assignments and processes that are necessary in order to achieve a specified result within a particular time frame (curriculum, 2004). The aim with the first two semesters is that the students come to master a project oriented form of work, enabling them to design their own or develop others peoples’ projects. The curriculum stresses that the KaosPilot should possess theoretical insight and the relevant tools for developing and leading projects, a general understanding of the various facets of project work, and the ability to lead complex projects in collaboration with others. The KaosPilots’ understanding of project work emphasizes a focus on the dynamic aspects of project leadership, paying attention also to the concerns of the pre-project stage i.e. setting the context and coordinating expectations, setting and motivating the team and creating and clarifying vision and project goals. The students are introduced to project management theories and tools. However, the leadership dimension, in terms of creating vision, communicating to and motivating team and stakeholders, sensing and facilitating group dynamics, and working from values, is prioritized.

The project form of working is made a central part of the curriculum, based on the premise that projects are a flexible way of organizing and lead initiative across departments, sectors and disciplines. Through engaging in creative project design the learning objective is that the KaosPilots are
able to design, develop and solve various types of assignments for the organizations and businesses they work with during their first and the ensuing years at the school. The project form of working thereby provides the student with a method that can be used in a job as an entrepreneur or as a free agent, where assignments are solved on an ad hoc basis for changing employers (Curriculum, 2004).

**Creative Process Design and leadership**

Creative process design is placed at the third semester of the education. The aim of the discipline is that the KaosPilot gains a reflective understanding of processes, and as such will be able to initiate, design and carry out creative learning processes and processes aiming at creating new product, processes or services, and to develop people and their organizations. More specifically, creative Process Design in this context is defined as the ability to create and facilitate constructive processes that guide individuals, teams and organizations towards the realization of their goals, visions and values (Curriculum, 2004). The discipline draws on different academic fields such as psychology, pedagogy, sociology, and the organisation and management literature, and the underlying sub-disciplines and themes are group creation processes, learning and the design and facilitation of learning processes, creative processes, coaching, systems thinking, personal leadership and change management. The process semester leads to the team to go on an outpost somewhere in the world for three months during the 4th semester. The outpost will be presented later.

**Creative Business Design**

During the final year of the school, the focus is on the discipline of creative business design, where the aims is that the students acquire a general understanding and knowledge of business development in order to be able to design and start up their own business, together with contributing to the creation of innovation in existing businesses.

Creative business design is defined as creative business concepts, including the products and services that a business supplies, and the underlying principles and processes that determine the organization’s expansion and development (Curriculum, 2004). The discipline encompasses entrepreneurship, business theory, market analysis, finance and societal conditions, and aims to enable the KaosPilot to realize a business idea that is characterized by being financially, environmentally and socially sustainable and based on personal motivation. Creative business design focuses primarily on entrepreneurship based on the individual student’s personal competencies, engagement and values. Through working with creative business design, often by the students starting up their own business during the final year, gives the students the basis to act constructively in relation to starting their own business, as well as getting experiences valuable in solving assignments for organizations that need to develop their area of business. Moreover, the school encourages the student not to compromise their ethics or personal values and interests, but instead to consider these as part of the foundation for the enterprise.
Core focus areas of sustainability, cultural diversity and social innovation

In March 2004, as part of the vision of being the best school for the world, the KaosPilots engaged in dialogue with a wide range of stakeholders, in order to make an elaborate list of both the positive and negative trends for the planet. This was part of a process of exploring which focus the school had to choose in order to move towards this vision, and contribute to positive local and global change. The answer that emerged was three new focus areas, or core aims, that should be reflected in the curriculum and the approach to learning practiced at the school. These areas were social innovation, sustainability, and cultural diversity.

The first focus area is Sustainability accompanied by the question of how to develop the ability of the students to think and design sustainability in all dimensions of their work - ecologically, economically, and socially. The background for this focus area is a belief that if we as nations, organizations and individuals do not in an active and purposeful way pursue and contribute to the reestablishment of a sustainable balance in nature, the present imbalances will make the planet inhabitable for our children, grandchildren, and generations to come. The challenge is incorporated into the curriculum as the aim of creating increased awareness and even a new consciousness on the individual level (the student), in companies and in society at large, so that the future will be met with a clear and empathetic respect towards the well-being of coming generations, other organisms and species, the planet as such and the new technology we bring into the world (Curriculum, 2004 and KaosPilot worldview paper, 2004).

The second focus area is Cultural diversity, focusing attention on the question on how the school can develop the students’ understanding of cultural diverse systems and societies, and support the ability to lead and create value through cultural diversity. This focus area was chosen due to the observation that if we do not learn to live together in a peaceful way with many cultures underneath the same roof, the present cultural and religious frontlines will only become more and more fundamentalist and violent and the belief that fundamentalist forces manage to set the agenda during this will render moderate forces on all sides increasingly passive and invisible. Incorporating cultural diversity into the curriculum the KaosPilots aims to raise consciousness and ask into how we create a sustainable, respectful and thereby conflict resolving dialogue between the involved cultural and religious parties of conflict situations, regardless of whether these situations happen in our own neighborhood, between nations or between global value systems (Curriculum, 2004 and KaosPilot worldview paper, 2004).

The third focal area is Social innovation, driven by the question of how students’ creativity towards new ways of cooperating between the different sectors in society can be supported. Social innovation deals in this context with how a new sense of community, and a re-negotiation of the relationship between individual and society, can be facilitated. The choice of social innovation as a
focus area rests on the belief that if we cannot create a balance between the increasing individualization of society and the necessity of a community built on solidarity, we lose the opportunity that exists right now to create the next generation of the Scandinavian welfare system and welfare in the world society (Curriculum, 2004 and KaosPilot worldview paper, 2004). Thus, social innovation imply a discussion on the relationship, the dynamics and the division of roles between the public, private and the nonprofit sector, and stress that the students address these questions in their projects and when working with organizations during and after their education.

The competencies model
The KaosPilot program is based on practical experience, and the main purpose, therefore, is not just for the students to gain knowledge but also their ability to convert this to action in the appropriate situations and contexts. The KaosPilot program builds on a competencies model encompassing five overarching areas of competence. One, are discipline-specific competencies divided into the three main disciplines of creative project, process and new business design. The second area of competency are relation competencies, the third are change competencies, four, are action competencies, and five, are meaning competencies.

The first, the discipline specific competencies denote the ability to master a specific situation or assignment using discipline specific knowledge and tools. This area of competence is usually what we focus on developing at more traditional business schools i.e. the students' ability to master specific tools and disciplines such as accounting, strategic planning tools, project management etc. The discipline specific competencies developed at the KaosPilots are the three disciplines of project, process and business design. The KaosPilots curriculum, and the way this is interpreted by the team leaders, stresses the discipline specific competencies cannot stand alone, but needs to be put to play using the other four competence areas to create holistic and responsible solutions. According to the KaosPilots, discipline specific competencies is just one area of competence that needs to be developed in management schools, and much more attention should be given to generic competencies existing in and between different disciplines.

The first of the four alternative competence areas in the KaosPilot model is the relation competencies, which are articulated as the ability to work in teams and to connect constructively to others, while collaborating on common assignments and goals. The relation competencies express the ability to create and maintain contact and trust, to understand, appreciative and respect other peoples' needs and interests, to develop and make use of influence through communication, and the ability to work with and resolve conflicts.

The third competence area is the change competencies, which cover the ability to respond to and facilitate change in a personal as well as professional context. The change competencies are articulated as being the ability to think in new terms and the ability to learn - and learn quickly. Moreover, this competence area envelopes the ability to manage and to navigate in ambiguity and
turbulence, as well as the curiosity and desire to initiate change through experiments. The change competencies is related to an attitude enabling a leadership attitude focused on possibilities rather than problems, which can also be articulated as an appreciative attitude or intelligence (Thatchenkery and Metzker, 2006).

The fourth area of competence is action competencies, expressed as the ability, not only to see opportunities, but also realizing them. Action competencies describe the ability to convert values and visions into practical, goal-oriented action, as well as the ability to display initiative, to prioritize and make decisions.

The fifth competence areas is the meaning competencies, which is the ability to take into account the larger social, cultural, economical and ecological contexts wherein the business is embedded, through an understanding of system dynamics. On a personal level, the meaning competencies are expressed as the ability to hold a personal vision, to act from personal values and gain insight into how values and beliefs influence action. As such, the meaning competencies covers the students’ ability to analyze, interpret and understand the societal, cultural, social, economic and ecological context in which a given process-, project- or business design initiative is being carried out.

The competence model serves as a tool for the students, with which they can observe their study related development and set appropriate developmental goals for themselves. The competence model is also a tool for the teaching staff in connection with the preparation of course content. The external lecturers are encouraged to relate their focus or subject to the competence model. Furthermore, the competence model is used as a framework for structuring coaching sessions and serves as a framework for assessing the students’ performance at their exams.

Analysis of the interviews suggests that which areas the students particularly develop competencies within, emphasizing some disciplines and competence areas discussed in the competency model, more than others, while also indicating additional competence areas. Also, interviews reveal that additional competencies seem to exist in the intersection between the five defined competence areas.

Strong competencies within creative process design and leadership is emphasized rawing also on the four non discipline specific competencies discussed in the previous section. Particularly emphasis is placed on the ability to sense and to navigate between different social context e.g. expressed by a student saying: "I am very transparent and aware of designing clear expectations with potential new partners. And I can change mode from being open and curious to acting and being very concrete". This ability goes hand in hand with the ability of many to communicate ideas, opinions and values to partners and customers. This competence could be defined as distinct communication competencies, characteristic of the KaosPilots students, and these abilities combine what the school articulates as the relation and the meaning competencies. Together this suggests that these competencies support the students in generating and sustaining a strong and vibrant network of relations.
Another area that is emphasized in the interviews is resilience and the ability to take action e.g. expressed in an interview with two KaosPilot students: “you learn that it is crucial to have the belief and the experience that makes you going on for a long time, even when everything is working against you.” and "We are taught a proactive attitude and ability to act. The energy is high and most students are very good at acting now and here.”

Moreover, the analysis shows a strong ability to generate and conceptualize ideas, within many different contexts, with the aim of creating new products, processes and services, an ability which could be articulated as creativity, or innovation competencies.

**A design attitude to leadership**

In addition to the competencies discussed above, the interviews suggest certain attitudes characteristic of many KaosPilot students, particularly curiosity, playfulness and an appreciative yet irreverent attitude. Also, the students express the importance of responsible action and to take the hole into considerations in the development of new products, processes and services. Together with the competencies outlined above this suggest that the KaosPilot school nurtures what e.g. Boland & Collopy (2004) define as a design attitude and approach to leadership.

Boland and Collopy (2004a) propose that managers may benefit from adopting a design attitude, understood as a unique mindset and approach to problem solving, in the shaping of products, processes and services that are both profitable and humanly satisfying (Boland and Collopy, 2004a). Underneath this proposition is the observation that management practice and education have allowed a narrow and limited vocabulary of decision making to drive a more expansive and embracing vocabulary of design out of circulation. A focus on teaching management students advanced analytical techniques for choosing among alternatives has been at the expense of effort at nurturing skills for shaping new alternatives. Boland & Collopy (2004a) argue that what is needed in management practice and education is the development of a design attitude, which goes beyond default solutions in creating new possibilities for the future. The premise underlying much of the of the research on that Managing as Designing (Boland and Collopy, 2004b) is that manages are designers as well as decision makers and that although the two are inextricably linked in management action, we have for too long emphasized the decision face of management over the design face. They suggest that now is the time to incorporate a better balance of the two attitudes to problem solving in management practice – and education.

A decision attitude toward problem solving is used extensively in management education and practice, portraying the manager as facing a set of alternative courses of action from which a choice must be made. The decision attitude, in this view, assumes that it is easy to come up with alternatives to consider, but difficult to choose among them. The design attitude towards problem solving, in contrast, assumes that it is difficult to design a good alternative, but once you have developed a truly great one, the decision about which alternative to select becomes trivial (Boland and Collopy, 2004a).
The decision attitude towards problem solving, and the many decision-making tools we have developed for supporting it, have strengths that make them suitable for certain situations. In a clearly defined and stable situation, when the feasible alternatives are well known, a decision attitude may be the most efficient and effective way to approach problem solving (Boland and Collopy, 2004a).

Herbert Simon, Nobel laureate in economics, wrote *The Sciences of the Artificial* (Simon, 1996) which is an interesting example of a well developed theory of the design attitude for managers (Boland and Collopy, 2004a). To summarize Simon's argument very briefly, the first step in any problem solving episode is representing the problem, and to a large extend that representation has the solution hidden within it. A decision attitude carries with it a default representation of the problem being faced, whereas the design attitude begins by questioning the way the problem is being represented. Simon concludes by asking us to strive for a kind of design that has no final goals beyond that of leaving more possibilities open to future generations than we ourselves inherited (Simon, 1996) and encourages us to avoid designs that create irreversible commitments for future generations. Lastly, he poses an invitation to open ourselves to the largest number of diverse experiences possible, in order to allow us to draw from an ever-wider variety of idea sources in order to make our designs humanly satisfying as well as economically viable (Simon, 1996).

By design attitude Boland & Collopy (2004a) refer to the expectation and orientation one brings to a design project. A design attitude views each project as an opportunity for invention that includes a questioning of basic assumptions and a resolve to leave the world a better place (Boland and Collopy, 2004a). Analysis of the case suggests that the KaosPilot School of Leadership and Social entrepreneurship is an example of a management education that succeeds in supporting the design aspects of management education.

In the following section we will look into how the competencies and attitudes discussed in this section relates to the approach to learning employed at the school.

**Part II: Leadership development – growing through action and appreciation**

This section discusses the interrelationship between the competencies and attitudes nurtured at the school and the learning processes and approaches employed in the 3-year learning process.

**Action oriented learning design**

It is the school's aim to create an exploratory and motivating learning environment with the student in the centre that achieves ownership of the process and responsibility for one's own learning. The ability to acquire competencies through reflection over practice is therefore a central and necessary aspect for the individual employee/employer. The KaosPilots' fundamental approach to teaching is therefore based on promoting learning through reflection over practice. The KaosPilots' pedagogical focus is on
the dynamic interplay between practice and theory, building on the premise that “in order to grasp something you have to grab it!” (Curriculum, 2004).

This approach to learning pervades all activities at the school, and is also reflected in the way the students are welcomed into the program. Each new student, on the first day at the school, is given, not an ID number, but a stack of business cards with his or her name on them, and a key to the building, the message being that you do not get an education at the KaosPilots – you take it! And so students, too, are called KaosPilots from the day they commence the education. Another integral part of the experiential approach to learning is evident in the outpost, taking place during the fourth semester of the education.

Since 1996 the KaosPilots has worked with the concept of an outpost, motivated by the desire and drive to create the very best organizational and professional framework for the school’s students when they head out into the world. At the same time the outpost functions as “a professional and cultural receiver and transmitter for the education”, and thereby inspires the entire organization back in Aarhus, Denmark and is brought back into a Scandinavian and European context.

The first KaosPilot outpost were in San Francisco, California in 1996, the second in Durban, South Africa in 2001, the third in Havana, Cuba in 2005, and in San Francisco once again in 2006, ten years after the first outpost in that city. Today the outpost is an integral part of the program and takes place during the 4th semester of the 3-year program. Recent outposts have been Vancouver, Canada in 2007, where the students worked with sustainability in close collaboration with local businesses and communities, and Shanghai in 2008 and 2009 engaging with local clients and communities in an exploration of social innovation and cultural diversity, respectively.

In the field of higher education, the perspectives articulated in the body of literature on experiential learning may hold a promise of contributing to a renewal and perhaps transformation of the way we view management education. Experiential learning is a family of approaches resting on different theoretical underpinnings ranging from constructivist over situative and critical perspectives to systems and systemic perspectives on learning. What these perspectives hold in common is the proposition that we learn through experience, whether this be through reflection, through participation in a community of practitioners or through the conversations in which we are engaged in, in our daily lives. Advocates for experiential learning argue that we, as humans, depend on our ability to adapt, not only in the reactive sense of fitting into the world, but in the proactive sense of creating and shaping those worlds (Kolb, 1984). Along this line, the valuing of the learner’s practical knowledge, and informal and incidental experience, can be a way to resist the domination of theoretical and canonical knowledge. On this note, experiential knowledge has often been understood as radical in challenging our notion of learning and through empowering the learner.

Vygotsky (1978) emphasized the role of individuals’ interaction with their socio-cultural environment in the process of constructing knowledge. He developed a theory of what he called the “zone of proximal development”, a time bounded site of community activity surrounding a person
which can limit or enhance cognitive development. The person learns by engaging fully in this zone particularly through dialogue. Vygotsky’s ideas have been influential in subsequent situational theories of learning. However, Vygotsky, like other constructivists, believed that the outcome and objective of learning was the development of individual consciousness and a sense of self mastery through a process of internal dialogue as well as interaction and dialogue with people and objects in the external world (Vygotsky, 1978).

For other constructivist writers such as (Schön, 1987) (Kolb, 1984) and (Mezirow, 2000) a person’s reflection is elevated as key to unlocking meaning and building knowledge from experience. The individual constructs new knowledge through experimentation, guided by personal intention, selecting focuses for learning from possibilities presented in the environment, and reflectively analyzing these experiences. The outcome is personal growth i.e. the individual develops in progression towards greater maturity and more refined knowledge.

Donald Schön (1983) has made significant contributions to the understanding of the relation between learning and practical experience, specifically in the context of workplace learning. Schön argues that professionals live in a world of uncertainty, complexity and value conflict where they often have to deal with situations for which no existing principles or theories learned through formal training or past experience can apply. He was interested in how reflection and particularly critical reflection plays out in the ongoing learning of professionals in their practice. He argued that practitioners learn by noticing and framing problems of interest to them in a particular way and then inquiring into and experimenting with solutions. When they experience surprise or discomfort in their everyday practice this reflective process begins. Knowledge is thus constructed through reflection during, as well as after, an experimental action taken to address a practical situation. When encountering such a situation, professionals are prompted to reflect in action by improvising and through on the spot experimentation, thinking up, testing out and refining various solutions. Furthermore, Schön emphasizes that professionals also engage in reflection some time after the experience is encountered, when they reflect on their own actions and alternative actions. Reflection is, in this view, paramount for learning and is both a process of reflecting in and reflecting on action (Schön, 1983). Moreover, another kind of reflection exists and happens when the learner asks into how a situation is framed in the first place, asking why things are and unfold the way they do. This is what Schön calls critical reflection, and is the process of probing into taken for granted assumptions, evaluation own actions and asking into how beliefs inform action.

David Kolb (1984) argues that learning is a process of creating new knowledge and skills through a four step process, first of encountering a concrete experience, followed by reflective observation, leading to abstract conceptualization and subsequent active experimentation (Kolb, 1984). First, the learner lives through some concrete experience, which can be a simulated experience designed to be a learning situation, such as an exercise allowing the learner to experiment, or this can be a real life experience. Second, the learner engaged in reflective observation on what was observed,
leading to the third step of abstract conceptualization, where principles and new understanding about
the situation and oneself are derived. Finally, the learner engaged in active experimentation, applying
what is learned to a new both similar and different situations. Kolb (1984) contends that although we
are exposed to a multitude of life experiences, not everyone learns from these. Learning happens only
when followed by reflection in a way that either links the new experience to previous learning or
transforms the learner's understandings in some way. Constructivists distinguish between reflection
and critical reflection, the latter sometimes leading to dramatic change in how the learner views
reality. Engaging in critical reflection is thus what enables transformative learning to occur.

The KaosPilots believe that learning is a process that involves both personal and professional
development (Curriculum, 2004), involving the head, the hand and the heart. Put differently, the school
aims at facilitating a balance through the education between knowledge, practical action and real
world projects and time and space for reflection and expressing feelings about the subject matter.

Mezirow (1991) has made contributions to constructivist theories on learning by theorizing
on how critical reflection interrupts, reconstructs and transforms human beliefs. The study of
transformational learning (Mezirow, 2000) may prove very relevant for leadership education, fostering
a more holistic approach to leadership where the personal and professional development is viewed as
going hand in hand and education is not only viewed as the development of skills and competencies,
but also the bringing forth of new mindsets. This process of perspective transformation is
fundamentally based on a critical reflective assessment of premises, and thus reflection is the process
by which we change our minds literally and figuratively (Mezirow, 2000).

The team leader

The KaosPilots believe that the only person, who can internalize learning into an integrated part of
one's own experience – is oneself (Curriculum, 2004). Therefore the KP is not teaching, but about
facilitating learning, by creating a proper learning space, where the students have the possibility to try
out various methods and solutions based on their own potential. The KaosPilot team leaders facilitate
the students in situations, where the experience followed by reflection and relevant theory can lead to
abstractions and thereby new experiments, new ways of handling a situation based on new knowledge
and new skills.

The team leader is sometimes referred to as the team coach, pointing also to this dimension of
the team leader role. Coaching is a central element in the relationship between the student and the
teaching staff in charge of coaching. Students have the right to a minimum of 2 or 3 coaching sessions
per year. The overall purpose of a coaching session is to heighten the student's competencies with
regard to taking charge of their own study-related development and thereby optimize their learning
process. As such, coaching should lead to the ability of the students to clarify own goals and visions
with regard to the learning process, as well as to plan a strategy for achieving. Moreover, the coaching
is a means to develop the students’ understanding of their strengths and weaknesses and is a central part of facilitating the personal development that is encouraged through at the school.

The KaosPlots perceive coaching to be about unfolding human potential and thereby maximizing learning, development, and performance. It is an approach aimed at helping the students to learn, rather than merely teaching. The coaching is characterized by being focused on the students’ own practice and experience of a situation, aiming to develop the student’s study-related qualifications and competencies as well as supporting the personal development of the students (Curriculum, 2004).

**Learning on the team**
In this section we will argue that an extensive appreciative feedback culture on the team, and continuous dialogue on the team and among the students and the team leaders, are intrinsic for the learning process. Analysis of interviews reveals that the team is viewed as a safe learning space for experimentation and reflection,

From a situative perspective, knowledge is understood as the ability to participate in a community of practice with increasing efficiency, and as such knowledge is not judged by what is true, but by what is relevant. Along this line, knowing does not exist separate from tools, community and activities of a particular situation. In this view, separating learning from doing is both artificial and repressive. Instead, the learning process is a process of becoming attuned to constraints and affordances of specific situations and the learner progresses though trajectories of increased participation and growth of identity. The learner moves from legitimate peripheral participation (Lave and Wenger, 1991) to a more central position with more competence and the desired learning outcome is thus to improve participation in interactive systems in social practices that are valued most by the learner and the community. Analysis of the interviews reveals that situative learning is closely related to the action and experiential approach to learning enforced at the school and that daily participation on activities on the team plays a big part in the learning and development of competencies experienced by the students.

**An appreciative learning approach and feedback culture**
Analysis of the interview reveals that appreciation plays a key role in the formation of competencies and attitudes of the students. The team leaders works from the premise that everyone has potential and that what we give attention grows building on the theories of appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider and Srivastva, 1987, Cooperrider et al., 2008). Moreover, the students are trained to engage in continuous and appreciative feedback on the team, enabling that the students become mirrors for each other, deliberately focusing on the strengths and resources of their team mates and approaching the frustrations that necessarily emerges when working closely together on a diverse team from the perspective of what is needed to change the situation rather than assigning blame. Interviews reveal
that the students and the team leaders support an appreciative feedback culture on the team, supporting the learning of the students (Barrett and Peterson, 2000).

In the following section we will look into the findings from the 10 interviews with KaosPilot alumni, discussing how the competencies and attitudes supported by the 3 years at the school is reflected in the leadership attitude and the businesses of KaosPilot alumni.

**Part III: Beyond the KaosPilot School - The attitudes and competencies reflected in businesses of KaosPilot alumni**

This section (Part III) is based on interviews with KaosPilot alumni, discussing the attitudes and competencies of the KaosPilot graduates and how these are rendered visible in their leadership and in their businesses. The section looks at the alumni and the way they create open spaces and rooms for possibilities through their network practices. This section also looks into the alumni’s co-creation methods and their attempts at open innovation as well as explanations for the absence of significant economical growth.

The alumni case material is represented by 15 SME’s either founded by or driven by entrepreneurs graduated at the KaosPilot School in the period 1994-2006. The 15 companies are chosen from approximately 420 alumni and picked out by their ability to survive and create value. The group of cases varies quite a lot due to branch, size and organization.

The diversity of the 15 businesses express that there is no typical career or type of business for a KaosPilot graduate. The diversity in ways of organizing and doing business can be explained by the fact that a KaosPilot in parts of the educational program work on his or her individual project with a self-selected subject and professional focus. Hereby the career can be initiated already during the second or third year of the education.

The research also draws a picture of some common patterns, approaches, attitudes and competences across the business cases of alumni. The common features are described here below through the following titles: "The global idealist and the social entrepreneur", "The graceful networker" and "Leadership attitude of the KaosPilot graduates". Furthermore, the analysis of the alumni businesses shows that the business manifest different forms of social value creation, but only weak

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5 our examples:
1. **Lorika Foundation** by Nike Kondakis. A development- and educational program for 30,000 Masais in the Kenyan bush, including training, education and a boarding school.
2.a **Kondakis Design** by Nike Kondakis. Sustainable clothes- and jewelry design placed in Kenya. A parachute collection is made from original recycled parachutes. www.kondakis.biz
2. **Baisikeli** by Henrik Smedegaard Mortensen. A social economical enterprise aiming to make the bicycle available to the poorest people in the world. www.baisikeli.dk
signs of economical growth, which is elaborated on in the section "A challenge with growth and scalability".

The global idealist and the social entrepreneur

Preliminary finding from the analysis of interview with alumni point to that the businesses started by KaosPilots are having high social impact, but that they are most often creating this impact from a "side-business", that does not initially create a profit. Instead, the income comes from a more traditional core business. However, alumni point to that they graduated before the three focus areas was made part of the curriculum and that this may influence the way their business is designed. It will be interesting to follow if the next generations of KaosPilots graduated after the new curriculum took effect in the spring 2004 will display a different awareness in working with sustainability, cultural diversity and social innovation as part of their business or job.

The KaosPilots seem to learn how to create, use and sustain relations and network aiming at win-win-win situations, expressed by an alumni business owner as: "Win-win-win means that it is not enough that the directly involved parties are winning – also the surrounding and the local environment also have to gain from the solution. If we make a project with a partner, the traditional win-win notion would require that both the partner and ourselves should gain from the solution. We also include the community, the area, the country or an even broader perspective, and require this environmental party to also gain from the solution." “All the time there is the aspect of social responsibility and win-win-win situations, an approach I got at the KaosPilots. It has to be meaningful for others than our selves”

There is no doubt that the entrepreneurs show general global concern and idealism as expressed by Nike Kondakis: "I feel that there is much more need for help in Africa than back home in Denmark".

The social value creation is still difficult to measure, but it is identified on two levels in this case material. Firstly, nearly every subject or project that a KaosPilot is involved in is printed with a certain ethical or social etiquette. The aim to do good; to change the existing game is identified implicit in the acts of the entrepreneurs: in the way they facilitate a workshop, create projects, communicate or interact with other people. Secondly, the social engagement is carried out or executed in social economical enterprises in 40% of the cases. KaosPilots are driven by the will to succeed, to create changes and to develop new solutions to solve existing problems.

Many KaosPilots have started projects, before entering the three-year program, but it is obvious that the entrepreneurship training at the school has amplified and increased their entrepreneurial skills. The KaosPilot entrepreneurs appear as founders of small companies and organizations and they try out well their entrepreneurship as entrepreneurs inside bigger companies like Rambøll (engineer based firm), Nordea (Bank) or Stoic (advertising agency) as well.

As an alumni at the entrepreneurship training at the KaosPilots says:"I have always had the entrepreneur-toddler in my stomach, but it has been boosted at the KP. To just do things, think out loud, to dare living your dreams – this have been strengthen at KaosPilots school."
The graceful networker

The analysis of the interview material reveals a very well developed and nuanced approach to collaborating and networking among alumni. The KaosPilots are trained in knowledge sharing and co-creation on many new ways in social networks e.g. expressed by alumni saying: “I am very open and connecting to a lot of people all the time. I am smiling, posing fun and creating confidence”. Both tendencies point to an interesting research proposal within open innovation, and particularly innovation aiming at social, environmental as well as financial impact.

The case study demonstrates that the KaosPilots create business opportunities primarily through their far-reaching networks, and to a certain degree they are able to engage in binding partnerships complementing the competencies they often seem to miss: strategy, structure and comprehension of business. A KaosPilot possesses a network competence, which opens the way for him and which is decisive in the start-up phase as well as in the development phase, the daily operation and the sales within the company. The network is a field of opportunities, which opens doors and creates value. There is an awareness of innovation as something to be achieved by fetching the right competences externally or by putting together the optimum ad hoc teams.

A drawback to the open network is that can be too superficial and thereby reduce the inclination to share knowledge. But as a supplement to the open network, the KaosPilots also take advantage of closed networks, for example networks consisting of five to seven old classmates or closed interdisciplinary groups holding meetings at a certain frequency. These groups share business ideas, secrets, challenges and victories and also thoughts about personal development.

The intimacy in closed networks can create a high degree of confidence and desire to share and thereby give rise to the diffusion of knowledge within the group and thereby creating efficient collaborations and results. Coleman (1988) points out that the intimacy promotes common agendas as well as a desire to share crucial and more complex knowledge to the advantage of the innovation process (Coleman, 1988).

The entrepreneurs work by the principle “share your darlings”, means that they are not afraid of sharing knowledge, ideas, contacts, stories or inspiration. It is very common to recommend contacts or to deliberately connect people, who are likely to profit from each other. As one the alumni puts it: “I’m a bit like Nokia’s "Connecting people". I do network by actively connecting people, and I don’t expect anything in return. Storytelling is the trump card in networks and in meetings with potential customers and investors, the good story opens doors.”

Leadership attitude of the KaosPilot graduates

All except one of the interviewed alumni describe their leadership attitude as facilitating and democratic and explain that they aim to and experience success in making people lead themselves and
take responsibility for the project or task at hand. This leadership attitude reflects the understanding of leadership expressed in the KaosPilot curriculum; that leadership is a distributed, collaborative process for effective change; leadership is open for participation and that leadership allows others to be leaders and thereby should aim at promoting the leader in others.

The work as process consultants for commercial customers during the studies, has given the KaosPilot professionalism in interaction with other. It is certainly on the interpersonal level the KaosPilot is strongest. The KaosPilot is experienced in focusing on a constant personal development and to constantly foster, clarify and practice his or her own personal leadership. The personal leadership includes training in personal integrity, authenticity, taking responsibility, nurturing a strong character and having a proactive and positive attitude. “You should know yourself before you can lead others”.

The discipline creative process design and leadership is, in the case material, mentioned as the most important discipline in the KaosPilot program. The discipline gives the entrepreneurs a very useful competence, applicable to most roles as leaders, facilitator and team players. In process leadership, the KaosPilot is trained to define goals and intentions, to clarify expectations and to define values and strategies. He or she is, through this mastery, used to handle conflicts, to take into account several perspectives, and to meet people where they are and to give and take honest feedback.

The training and the developed professionalism in the discipline process design and leadership makes it natural for the KaosPilots to develop a facilitating, coaching, empathic or democratic leadership style as they claim to do. This leadership style prefers motivation of others to take action, take responsibility and act proactive more than being directive himself. KaosPilots are trained into leading through appreciative inquiry, reflective questioning, mirroring and involvement, so they claim that they lead democratic. From this perspective they can lead as well very directive whiteout calling it so.

**A challenge with growth and scalability**

The analysis indicates that the KaosPilot companies do not succeed in growing their business. One could argue that they, as social entrepreneurs have a huge challenge commercializing their social business ideas. In regard to growth and scalability the ability to commercialize is interesting in this case, though societal change and social innovations are on the strategic agenda for the KaosPilot and they would benefit from growth. The fact that growth is missing could be explanation in at least three ways. Firstly, the absence of company growth can be attributed to the age of the companies, which are relatively young, ranging from two to ten years. Secondly, the case study shows that several of the alumni are not motivated for growth, but more motivated for a small firm with direct contact to customers and suppliers and with close and near relations, journeys, friends and family. Many KaosPilots are highly attracted by a balance between work and life. Inspirational journeys and personal development seems more important than executing a commercial success. Thirdly, the lack of
growth may be explained by the content of the curriculum. The alumni express that they have missed sufficient lectures and learnings in general business understanding, business development, start-up and how to run a business, and competencies and knowledge needed to organize and scale their ideas.

One example of this is expressed by two of the KaosPilot alumni telling that: "We learned to navigate in very diverse cultures with different nationalities, and personalities under the education" and "the social competencies are important. We learnt to include very different personalities and nationalities by working close together in a feedback culture on the team. This helps me a lot to day in my company, e.g. at the time when operating in Japan with our design."

The successful KaosPilot entrepreneurs seem to have the inclination and ability to team up with persons who complement their own competencies e.g. an IT-nerd and a trained businessman with experience in operating, selling, budgeting and accounting.

**Conclusion**

Based on the case this paper contributes by presenting an alternative approach to management education aiming at developing creative and responsible leadership. The case presents an example of a way to imagine and articulate an alternative approach to developing leadership competencies, where action learning and an appreciative attitude and feedback culture are an integral part of the learning process. Also, the case suggests a set of competencies and attitudes, which can support leaders in navigating the dynamic business environments of today and in creating businesses for the benefit of the whole.

The analysis places emphasis on creative process design and leadership as a signature competence of the KaosPilot. Creative process design and leadership is one of three discipline specific competencies in the curriculum, and is articulated as the ability to design and lead creative processes with the aim of developing new products, processes or services, or developing people and their communities. The discipline draws on other competence areas, particularly the ability to assert strong personal leadership through acting from personal vision and values, and the ability to sense and navigate between multiple contexts and the ability to build trust and establish generative relations to others. The latter is reflected in the extensive networks and the ability to create value through these networks, expressed by the KaosPilot alumni. Moreover,

The key competencies are accompanied by an appreciative attitude, inclined to look for opportunities instead of seeing the obstacles. Moreover, the study suggests that the school nurtures a curious and irreverent leadership attitude, accompanied by an ability to ask generative questions and an inclination to question the taken for granted. The KaosPilot environment attracts creative and idealistic students and employees, which, in conjunction with the overall agenda and vision of the school, have created a culture with lots of playfulness and imagination and a room where spaces for possibilities are highly valued. This creates vitality and life, and can turn out to be part of an optimum
frame for creativity and ultimately for the possibility for innovation to occur. The analysis suggest that the school supports the students in being able to handle a high level of ambiguity and to remain in a divergent, or fluid, state when needed in the creative process and through this holding an open space for creativity. However, the analysis also suggests that the students may benefit from developing competencies within decision making and abilities to facilitate converge later in the creative process. These findings can be related to the discussion on managing as designing and a design attitude in leadership discussed by e.g. Boland & Collopy (2004), suggesting that the KaosPilots develop a strong design attitude as process designers and leaders, perhaps on the expense of decision making competencies.

The analysis of interviews reveal that the development of competencies and attitudes is experienced as being closely related to the action learning approaches employed at the school, particularly hands-on collaboration with clients in addressing concrete challenges, and the reflections that ensue. Further, the competencies and attitudes supported at the school, is ascribed to a strong appreciative feedback culture and situated learning on the team where direct, continuous and appreciative feedback is an essential part of daily life at the school both between the team leaders and the students and among the students.

The analysis of the interviews with KaosPilot alumni point to that the graduates feel very comfortable by starting new projects and businesses, which is ascribed to the processes of engaging in real world projects, to failing, reflecting, learning and then acting again continuously throughout the 3-year study. Furthermore, the interviews suggest that KaosPilot graduates prioritize playfulness, close personal relationships and holistic and socially and environmentally responsible solutions over ambitions for economical gain and growth. The analysis of alumni interviews shows that the KaosPilot businesses create economic as well as social value, but at the same time that they only display weak signs of economic growth.

Discussion and opportunities for future research

This section provides reflections on alternative explanations of the findings as well as a further discussion of some of the findings of this study, also pointing to questions that will be interesting to pursue in future research.

The study points to the strengths as well as some of the points of improvement and potential development in the educational program. One question is whether the curious, irreverent and playful attitude of KaosPilot students and graduates can lead to a reduced ability to make decisions, to define and follow a strategy and to establish the needed structure to fulfill the strategy.

The special network competences of the KaosPilots match tendencies visible in the rest of the society. One tendency is an increased consciousness about the importance of collaborating and co-creating in open networks with peers, and especially within highly diverse teams. This can potentially
lead to open innovation if it reaches the next level and is matched with relevant structured and strategies. There are several examples of open innovation in the case studies as a natural consequence of the curious and relationally oriented mindset. When working with open innovation, ideas can crystallize and be commercialized as a product, a service or a new business model at all stages of a development process and appear as joint ventures, spin-offs or actual new companies. Companies buy processes or ideas from other companies and sell or give away ideas or processes, that they do not need themselves (Chesbrough, 2006). Moreover, high-quality interactions where customers are invited to co-create and combine unique experiences and knowledge with the company are crucial to creating new competitive advantages (Prahalad, 2008). This matches very well with the competencies and attitudes of the student and graduate KaosPilots and the approach to value creation evident in the businesses of alumni.

It has for years been a clear ambition that social innovation, and an overall focus on social issues, should be a cornerstone of the curriculum, which is also manifesting in the businesses designed and run by educated KaosPilots. 50% of the interviewed alumni address social and environmental issues at a different level. However, they show only a slight social impact when it comes to addressing serious and global challenges. Some have established mutual beneficial partnerships with much bigger organizations to start up building social enterprises. This point to an interesting opportunity, argued by e.g. Hockerts (2009) that future successes within sustainability and social economics are to be found within the exchange between small innovative social entrepreneurs and large social-minded enterprises with great influence (Hockerts and Wüstenhagen, 2009).

Staff statements and interviews with students from existing classes at the KaosPilot School (2009) show that there is a growing interest for social, cultural and environmental issues among the students of the school, so a new course for the leadership education could include emphasis on training competencies and methods that allows future KaosPilot to build for-profit companies with a strong social or environmental purpose. The KaosPilots have just published a revised edition of the 2009 curriculum. Moreover, the tagline of the school has been changed in September 2009. Practical implications of this study are that a dialogue between scholars, alumni, the staff and the students is enforced in order to share the insights and perspectives generated through the study. Some of the challenges and recommendations from the 30 qualitative interviews of this study could inspire the next version of the KaosPilot curriculum.

The case study begins to draw an image of a new collaborative and networked form of social entrepreneurs. What if the KaosPilots represents an emerging new form of leaders and entrepreneurs that could be described as entrepreneurs that start up several more sporadic and experimental developing projects during a life period, without succeeding with one or two gigantic ones. Imagine that these projects all create different kinds of value for people and the planet on their way, and that these low scale but multiple and diverse up-start companies and projects very well fit into the dynamic globalized society facing us today and in the near future.
References


